CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION RESOURCE SHARING BETWEEN LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

Abstract
Resource sharing is a method of overcoming the limitations of the individual libraries in respect of their resources by way of co –operation and co-ordination among the participating libraries. In the recent past, resource sharing concept has prime factor and playing vital roles in libraries because of innovative developments in ICT. Resource sharing has become a prime reason for establishing co-operation between libraries

without any geographical barriers. With this backdrop, this paper attempts to discuss the concepts of resource sharing activities. It also identified prospects and challenges of resources sharing in Nigeria for its underdeveloped infrastructure and consequences thereof. It brings out some suggestions for improvement.

Keywords: Information, Resource sharing, Libraries,

Introduction

Today, the object of resource sharing has changed the old concept of resource sharing due to multi-dimensional growth of published documents in recent time. Increasing cost of books and subscribing to periodicals, advancement of new technology for information processing and dissemination are some of the fundamentals factors which require information resource sharing among libraries. For a long time, libraries were practicing information sharing among libraries. Besides entering into inter-library loan practice, libraries thought seriously of resource sharing because of the proliferation of information which was the outcome of the rapid growth of publications in an era of the limited budgetary allocation, hence the need to integrate libraries cautiously into resource sharing in their principle of collection development. For collection development, participating libraries should come together and cooperate in these two broad areas:

- Developing the collection on shared basis;
- Developing services for exploiting such collection.

Resource implies a thing, a person or an action to which one turns for aid and help in time of need. The term resource is used to designate any or all of the materials, functions, services and the expertise of the professional and non-professional staff. Aina (2004) define information as increasing the state of knowledge of a recipient, resolving uncertainty, value in decision making, all published and unpublished knowledge about any given subject and body of knowledge.

Resource sharing activities have always been one of the most important obligations of libraries worldwide because no library can ever be sufficient or boast of having all the required resource for its users. The basic function of the library as a dynamic institution is the provision of adequate resources and matching of those resources with the needs of its users. Information improves knowledge and helps in making decisions, a means of communication in the society and helps to resolve uncertainty. In the so called information society, the concept of information is highly appreciated and used in nearly every discipline.

Information brings clarity and creates an intelligent human response in the mind. Resource sharing implies sharing of library resources by participating libraries among themselves on the basis of mutual co-operation. This can be implemented in the areas of documents, manpower, facilities, services, building, space or equipment. The advantage of this co-operative venture is for users of participating libraries have access to resources of not only his own library, but also those of all the other participating libraries.

Library

A Library can be described as a place where information materials of different format are systematically acquired, organized, stored, preserved and disseminated to users at the appropriate time to meet their information needs. Library houses different materials ranging from hard copies such as textbooks, periodicals, journals, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, government publications to mention but a few. Library also acquire information resources in soft copy such as CD-ROM, databases, internet resources, audio materials, video materials, microforms, among others. Library provides physical or digital access to materials. A library is also seen as the assemblage of knowledge in all its ramifications. According to Ode and Omokaro (2010), library is a designated building where information in prints and other formats are collected, organized, carefully prepared according to some specific or definite plan, and made accessible for reading and consultation by all ages and various interests. Library has a vital role to play as information provider; it provides services that will meet the requirement of their users at all times. Library can also be viewed as a store which stocks all kinds of knowledge and information carriers of resources that are meant to be consulted and used by users with little or no expense on their part (Aina, 2004).

The main goal of the library is to pull library materials together in order to render more satisfactory services to the users and making information resources available to them. Rajkoomar (2012) affirmed that library is a treasure-house of knowledge. It is very important for man to preserve and conserve valuable knowledge and information contained in the books and other forms of information for posterity purposes (preserve knowledge and information for the coming generations). The central mission of a library is to collect, organise, preserve, and provide access to such knowledge and information. Therefore, library serves as an essential agent between the past, present, and future transformation in our cultural, educational, social, economic, political and other spheres of life.

Information Resources

Information resources are data and information assets of an organisation, personnel, equipment, and information technology of an organization. Information resources are grouped into two (2) according to their formats: they are printed and non-printed; examples are general reference materials, pamphlets, textbooks, audio, visual, audio-visual and electronic resources.

Sources of Information

(a)   Primary information sources include: records, raw data, technical reports, statistical data, proceedings of meetings/conferences and seminars, fiction, newspaper articles, emails etc.

(b)   Secondary information sources include: bibliographies, dictionaries, and encyclopaedias, handbooks, indexes, and abstracts, monographs, literature reviews etc.

(c)   Tertiary sources are between secondary and tertiary sources in most cases. They basically consist books, guidebooks, manuals, library catalogues, citation indexes, indexing and abstracting etc.

(d)   Information resources for people with special needs.

- Visually Impaired People: Braille materials, magnify text, smart view processors to assist partially sighted people, tape recorder or transistor to listen to text, talking books etc.
- Hearing Impairment People: Audio-cassettes, DVDs, Videos, hearing aids.
- People with Intellectual Retardation: Colourful pictures, charts or models. (Ibenne, 2010, Agbato, 2014).

Information Resource Sharing

In the age of information explosion, no library however big or rich is able to satisfy all the needs of its users due to tremendous number of document as well as information published every moment. The demands and needs of library users also change from time to time; therefore, library must be adequately equipped and ready to satisfy the ever changing information needs of their users. To solve the problems of information explosion, the concept of resource sharing came in to be. Resource sharing or interlibrary cooperation is a phenomenon that is perhaps as old as libraries (Edoka, 2000). In the field of library studies, the history of resource sharing can be traceable to when documents were made available through various forms shared such as cataloguing, library cooperation, interlibrary loan union catalogue etc.

At inception, inter-library lending constituted the major aspects of resource sharing. Resource sharing in libraries is defined as a mode of operation where by functions are shared in common by a number of libraries in its most positive effects. Resource sharing entails reciprocity, employing partnership in which each member has something useful to contribute to others and in which every member is willing and able to make available when needed. Resource sharing is a wide phrase embracing library cooperation, library systems and networking. It is an omnibus expression to cover cooperation, coordination, interlibrary loans, cooperative acquisition, storage and processing. According to A.L.A. Glossary of Library and Information Science, resource sharing is a term covering a variety of organizations and activities engaged in jointly by a group of libraries for the purposes of improving services and/or cutting costs. Resources Sharing is simply sharing of library resources with other

participating libraries that are in need of it. It is a type of library cooperation, where every participating libraries share unused and sometime their valuable library resources with other libraries. According to Odini (1991) resource sharing is the process whereby the resource of a group of network libraries is made available to the sum total of the persons entitled to use any of those libraries.

Likewise, resource sharing can be an agreement amongst participating libraries where each library is willing to share its resources with other members when the need arises. Nwalo (2008) defines resource sharing as a formal arrangement by a group of organizations that have common interests, to pull their material and human resources together so as to meet clientele needs much more than they could have done if they were to depend on individual efforts. Reitz (2004) reiterated that resource sharing activity is the result of agreement, formal and informal among a group of libraries to share collections, data facilities, personnel etc. for the benefit of the users and to reduce the expense of collection development. Today, it embraces many more activities. Resource sharing may be established by informal or formal agreement, by contract or may operate locally regionally, nationally and internationally. The resources shared may be collections, bibliographic data, personnel, planning activities, etc. In simply terms, library cooperation or library resource sharing is when two or more libraries exist and work jointly on agreements to achieve their goals.

Furthermore, Chatterjee (2015) stated that resource sharing is not merely a means of mutual sharing of information resources available in different libraries, but a means of utilizing the information resources of one library for generating services by another library. The goal of resource sharing is to maximize the availability of materials and services at the minimum expense among libraries. It is a concept of give and take whenever a need arise with some agreements. Malhot (1989) avers that sharing breaks down institutional barriers since librarians identify libraries that have what they need and obtain these resources from them. Exchange of collections, equipment, manpower and experience makes libraries richer and more productive.

Why libraries have to share their resources?
Digital Age as a Facilitator for Resource Sharing

The advent of information and communication technology, which characterizes the digital age, has brought a turnaround in resource sharing. Digitization of resources is designed to support the creation and preservation of digital contents. This means that the emergence of computer through the internet and online services has brought an improvement in sharing of resources. ICT has brought to bear new dimensions in the methods of generating, processing, storing and disseminating information. Digitization brings the information to the user wherever they are. Once the user has a computer connected to the internet, there is no need to visit a library building to access resources. One way of doing this is by placing digital resources on a network so that it becomes available to all participating libraries. It also encourages updating of information on regular basis.

Nwachukwu (2009) viewed ICT as an umbrella term for acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating information whether in textual, numerical, graphic or vocal form, using computer and telecommunication. ICT is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission of digital data (Adiagwai, 2011; Etonyeaku, 2013). Information and communication technology according to Adewoyin (2009) is the new communication and computing technology used for creating, storing, selecting, changing, developing, receiving and displaying many kinds of information. Oketunji (2000) defines ICT in the library parlance as the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information.

ICT help to provide different access points to users to the avalanche of literature existing in their fields. Ilo (2008) observes that by providing different access points for users to locate required information, the world has become a global village and everyone linked to an electronic neighbour. With ICT, the resources of the libraries participating in co-operation can be accessed online. This affords users ample opportunity to harness a vast sea or pool of information without necessarily investing on energy and time. The generation of information and the distribution of the same are facilitated by ICT. Digitization removes geographical and time constraints associated with traditional access to materials. Since materials are not in their physical format, there is no checking out, stealing or wrong shelving of items.

Digital resource sharing is an improvement on manual resource sharing. To a great extent, it has removed rigors and inefficiencies, which characterized manual sharing. Information sources are located in different libraries all over the world. Such information sources have been packaged in digital formats. Libraries can therefore share online via databases, electronic journals, online reference tools, web resources, electronic books etc. Ibrahim (2008) noted that ICT in libraries improved quality of information in terms of accuracy, level of details, timeliness and increasing efficiency through the sharing of common database either in the same library or externally. The use of computers and internet connectivity has made it possible the uploading of bibliographic records on the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) to the internet for global access.

Digitization enhances preservation of rare publications, dissertations, artefacts etc. Digital resource sharing helps, participating libraries to eliminate duplication. Through interconnectivity, it is possible to see the holdings of each participating library at a glance. It therefore provides a clue on what is available and therefore helps participants to concentrate on the acquisition of very relevant ones, thus freeing scarce financial resources for alternative uses (Ilo, 2008).

Needs for Information Resource Sharing

Ibrahim (2006) noted that the need for information resource sharing stems from three underlying trends of modern society. The growth of all forms of literature, the increasing

reliance on information to enable society function effectively, inflation in the cost of materials coupled with the increasing availability of technology. The needs are as follows:

- Information explosion and no library is self-sufficient: In this 21st century of information explosion, no library can effectively satisfy its users from the resources within its walls. In view of this, libraries need to cooperate with other libraries to improve it services.
- Language barrier: Sharing therefore, makes information available at low cost consequently reduces frustration and language barrier of information users.
- Funds limitation: Low budget makes it difficult for libraries to provide optimum resources for their users.
- Increase in user population and quality of library services: Due to the large number of library users, libraries need to share their resources to enable user's greater access to larger collection. Increase in user population demands growth in libraries and services, due to the increase in users' demand for diversified information, the libraries are prompted to investigate ways and means for a wider range of service and collections. Resource sharing offers practical solutions to these problems.
- Growth of knowledge in different subjects and specialization: The growth of all forms of literature, the increasing reliance on information to enable society function effectively encourages resource sharing.
- Increase in the number of members of user community – teachers, scholars and students in tertiary institutions.
- Lack of environment to make use of available computer and communication technology for efficient and productive use in libraries. (Muthu, 2013).
- Economic resources: General Price Index everywhere indicates a rising trend. Prices of book and journals have zoomed up over the years. This has tremendously affected the purchasing capacity of libraries. In spite of governmental and institutional finances, libraries are not in a position to buy all that is require for their user community.

Methods of Information Resource Sharing

- **Inter library loan and cooperative cataloguing:** It involves two or more libraries. A library which does not have a particular library material desired by one client will borrow the material requested from another library on behalf of the client who needs the material. This will give room for access to diverse information resources and libraries to promote free flow of information. Sharing cataloguing will enable users to have greater access to large collection. Catalogues can prepared co-operatively, so as to produce union catalogues of books, serials, etc. (Aina,2004: Ashikuzzaman, 2014)
- **Cooperative storage and Reference:** Publications have been increasing in number, far beyond practical limits of easy storage. This has been happening with respect to publications on every subject and in every discipline.

- Co-operative storage would result in economy of space and money. It would also keep track of catalogue entries and help avoid duplication. The concept of co-operative storage can be put into practice at least in respect of less frequently used material like certain books and back volumes of serials.
- **Reprographic service:** Photocopies of extracts of these stored materials {to the extent to which copy right law allows} can be made available at various individual libraries to meet the more urgent needs of the readers.
- Documentation centre
- **Union list of serials and bibliographies:** It provides access to the journal holdings of all member libraries. (Muthu, 2013)

Prospects

The need for resource sharing in libraries cannot be overemphasised. The prospects accruing from it include:

1. **Increase Availability and Accessibility of resources:** Clientele of participating libraries will have access to resources available in all the libraries. Resources can be moved from one library to another manually or online. This provides an easy access to and easy/free flow of information.

2. **Diminish Cost:** Resource sharing will create positive effect on library budget in term of cost or more services at lesser cost than can be undertaken individually. Avoidance of unnecessary duplication of information resources, their processing and maintenance cost.

3. **Building library collections:** Resource sharing helps in building specialized collection and all participating libraries need not duplicate the procurement of similar materials. Libraries will help each library to concentrate on areas of its own concern. This facilitates availability of large collection and even the basic material required by the users can be obtained without causing much delay.

4. **Resource Exploitation:** Resource sharing advocates making reading material of one library available to the clients of other libraries. Thus, the resource sharing exposes the reading materials to a wider group of users. Similarly, the services of a library can be exploited by the users of other libraries.

5. Co-operative activities like acquisition, exchange, storage, binding, training, reference and documentation services, inter-library loans, etc can also be done easily.

6. **When libraries have challenges with specific users 'requests, resource sharing helps them to identify libraries that have such materials:** The librarian can then make arrangements on how to obtain these resources for the users. This indirectly saves the time, energy and money that the user would have spent in going to such libraries to source for the material by themselves. This will facilitate users to have better access to library collection and services and enable the users to be more exposed to resources that are not available in their own library

7.   **While libraries share materials they shared experiences and ideals:** Librarians are faced challenges in the daily execution of their work and no librarian can boast of having all the wealth of experience needed to face present and future demands in the library. It is necessary therefore, for libraries to share work, expenses and benefits.

Each library gains from the money and efforts accruing from active participation. While exchanging materials libraries with fewer resources have the privilege of enjoying the resources of bigger ones. In addition, it provides wider platform for mutual benefit, irrespective of institutional size and capacity.

Challenges

It is clear that resource sharing activities have significant roles in African Countries especially in Nigeria. However, most libraries in Nigeria face many constraints in their efforts for sharing resource. Some of the factors are: corruption, mismanagement of resources, inflation which has eaten deep and negligence of libraries and allied institutions. Financial support for most libraries in Nigeria has always been on decline. This unfortunate situation has drastically affected all aspects of library and information services in the country. Odini (1991) also noted that most developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, lack data on the present library situation and this constitute a serious obstacle to effective planning and resource sharing activities. Many countries do not know how many workers are employed in the libraries, and at what levels, what their collections contain, or what use is made of them, the number of users they have along with their needs. Other major problems include that of poor facilities for rapid communication among libraries which otherwise enhance resource sharing activities. Most Nigerian libraries find it difficult to acquire the latest ICTs such as computers, internet, as well as large network databases. In a situation whereby even the ICTs are provided, information technology literacy among Nigerian librarians is still at its lowest ebb. Finally, lack of standardization of bibliographic data records as well as other inconsistencies adds to problems of resource sharing activities.

Recommendations

In recognition of the diverse challenges that hinder effective resource sharing in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made as a way out.

1.   There is every need for proper funding of libraries for effective resource sharing. The parent body should see the library as the hallmark of the institution and also understand There that the benefits accruing from resource sharing can only be enhanced if enough fund is made available for the purchase of the facilities and the resources that are needed for exchange. That our libraries should also seek more financial assistance especially from other departments, organizations, NGOs etc. The Nigerian Government must realize that information is a national resource that cannot be toyed with. The professionals can educate people in the corridors of power on the need of cooperation and networking for the use of the country.

2.   There is the need to have a national body, which will be responsible for planning resource sharing activities and its effective implementation. Such a body should

comprise of the Nigerian Library Associations (NLA); National Library of Nigeria (NLN). The bodies should ensure that co-operating libraries update their catalogue and send them for inclusion in the national union catalogue. They should also ensure that libraries acquire ICT tools for effective library operations and resource sharing. The bodies should be involved in maintaining standards in resource sharing.

3. There must also be willingness on the part of Nigerian librarians to change their attitude and embrace the ICTs around. Professional bodies needs to put efforts to sensitize librarians and other library staff by organising conferences and activate other fora for awareness drive on the importance of sharing of resource among libraries.

4. Training and retraining sessions should be organized on regular basis for all categories of staff involved in digital resource sharing. The success of the operations of ICT facilitates used in sharing depends on the ability of the staff involved to carry out the required implementations. The training among other things should cover the techniques needed to input data in the computer, surfing information from the internet and using different telecommunication facilities to exchange information.

5. Finally, a dire need for the standardization of bibliographic data records is felt. The National Library must give priority to this for achieving meaningful development and success. This in the long run will help to develop international networking and resource sharing.

Conclusion

Resource sharing is very important to libraries in developed and developing countries Libraries must take advantage offered by ICTs to establish sustainable resource sharing network. This paper explores the crucial role of resource sharing programmes among libraries for sharing information resources bringing out the problems affecting the development of resource sharing activities in Nigeria, with recommendations. The users of these libraries will continuously have access to a wide variety of information of their choice. The challenge before our professionals and professional associations is to see that the country build a functional network in order to ensure that information resources in the country are easily available to those who use them.

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